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speedily adopted. Proofs of its destructive habits were cited from standard authors, showing that the bird had been the acknowledged enemy of mankind for more than five thousand years. When writing was invented the sparrow was selected for the hieroglyphic character signifying *enemy*.

“Sonnini, in the *Dictionaire d’Histoire Naturelle*, published in 1817, says :—

“Sparrows are impudent parasites, living only in society with man and dividing with him his grain, his fruit, and his home; they attack the first fruit that ripens, the grain as it approaches maturity, and even that which has been stored in granaries. Some writers have wrongly supposed that the insects destroyed by them compensated for their ravages on grain; eighty-two grains of wheat were counted in the craw of a sparrow shot by the writer, and Rougier de la Bergerie, to whom we owe excellent memoirs on rural economy, estimates that the sparrows of France consume annually ten million bushels of wheat.’

“Jardine says that a price is set on their heads because of their severe depredations on grain and garden seed, and Valmont-Bomare makes a similar statement in his *Dictionary*.

“That their destructive propensities were popularly known in England is shown by Cowper’s lines :—

“The sparrows peep and quit the sheltering eaves
To seize the fair occasion; well they eye
The scattered grain, and thievishly resolved
To escape the impending famine: often scared
As oft return, a pert, voracious kind.”

Our native insectivorous birds, including the Crow and Robin, which have lately fallen into disfavor, should be carefully protected. They undoubtedly save more money to the farmer in eating grubs, worms, and insects, than he loses by their fondness for grains and fruits. If we destroy the balance of nature, and cause a disproportion between the number of insectivorous birds and their insect food, we shall certainly suffer from the increase of obnoxious insects.

—♦— GEOLOGY.

ADVANCE OF GEOLOGICAL SCIENCE. — In his inaugural address, the President (W. R. Grove) of the British Association stated that most geologists of the present day, instead of holding that the breaks or chasms in the geological record represent sudden changes in the formation of the earth’s crust, adopt the alternatives that they arise from dislocations occasioned since the original deposition of strata, or from gradual shifting of the areas of submergence; that the advance of science has more or less filled up the gaps supposed to exist between the characteristics of the extinct and the new species; and that the apparent difficulty of admitting unlimited modification of species would seem to have arisen from the comparison of the extreme ends of the scale, where the intermediate links, or some of them, were wanting.

In these statements the President struck the key-note of the proceedings of the Geological section during the following week. Never, probably, did the authors of papers, or those who took part in the discussions which they elicited, appeal so little to convulsion, cataclysm, or catastrophe. — *Quarterly Journal of Science, London.*

MICROSCOPY.

THE MICROSCOPE IN MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE. — In a case of poisoning by means of corrosive sublimate maliciously substituted for the proper medicine, and in which there was a doubt of the utmost importance to remove, as to the source of the poison, rendering it uncertain whether the child had met with its death by accident, carelessness, or otherwise, Mr. Deane, by the aid of the microscope, determined, in the most unequivocal manner, that the poison was derived from a small parcel of the same substance, kept in a piece of rag in the house of the child's parents, where it died, thus rendering it quite certain that the death of the child was premeditated, and at the same time removing every trace of suspicion from innocent parties, whose care and common sense had been called in question. — *Address of the President, James Glaisher, of the Microscopical Society, London.*

THE POLYCYSTINA. — In a paper on the structure and affinities of the Polycystina [one of which, *Podocyrthis Schomburgkii*, is figured on the left side, at the bottom of the title-page of the *NATURALIST*], Dr. Wallich has furnished us with an elaborate account of this obscure family of the Protozoa, and a classification based, as he believes, on the only constant characters it exhibits, viz., those involved in the mode of development and growth of the silicious framework within, and around which their soft part, or sarcode, is sustained. — *Ib.*

EXPLORATIONS AND WORKS IN PROGRESS.

The Lyceum of Natural History of Williams College, propose to send out early this summer a scientific expedition to South America. It will be under the charge of Prof. James Orton, of the University of Rochester. The design of the party, to consist of twelve, is to collect specimens of Natural History, and study the physical geology of the Cordilleras, making Quito the base of their operations. Special observations will also be made on the physical geography of the region, particularly the nature and altitude of the volcanic cones.

This active society has already sent out five expeditions; two to Nova Scotia, one to Newfoundland, one to Florida, and one to Labrador and Greenland. Subscriptions to aid the expedition are desired.